Influencer Endorsement, Electronic Word-Of-Mouth, And Online Reviews as Determinants of Consumer Purchase Decisions in Digital E-Commerce: A Structured Literature Review

Elvina Putri Shinta[1], and Budi Suprapto[2]*, Mohd Fazli Mohd Sam[2], Yosephine Angelina Yulia[3]

[1]Department of Management, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

[2]Fakulti Pengurusan Teknologi dan Teknousahawanan, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka, Malaysia

[3]Department of Digital Business, Universitas Sugeng Hartono, Indonesia.

***Corresponding author**

DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100900779

Received: 04 October 2026; Accepted: 09 October 2026; Published: 23 October 2026

ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed how consumers search for product information, evaluate alternatives, and make purchase decisions in e-commerce. In the beauty and cosmetics market, influencer endorsement, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and online reviews have become prominent sources of persuasive and diagnostic information. This article reviews the literature on the relationships between these three digital marketing stimuli and consumer purchase decisions, with particular attention to the context of beauty products marketed through digital commerce platforms. A structured literature review approach was employed using literature identified through Scopus, Emerald, and ScienceDirect searches with combinations of the keywords influencer endorsement, eWOM, online reviews, purchase intention, and purchase decision. The original search identified 1,592 potentially relevant records; however, the present review does not treat the number of retrieved records as evidence of bibliometric findings unless bibliometric outputs are explicitly available. The literature was synthesized thematically around source credibility, information quality and diagnosticity, consumer trust, social influence, and purchase decision formation. The review indicates that influencer endorsement can affect consumer responses through perceived credibility, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and identification with the influencer. eWOM influences consumer evaluation by reducing information uncertainty and providing socially generated product information, while online reviews provide experience-based evidence that consumers use to assess product quality and risk. The three mechanisms are related but conceptually distinct and should not be treated as interchangeable constructs. The review identifies a need for future empirical research integrating source-based persuasion and consumer-generated information within a single explanatory framework, particularly in emerging-market e-commerce and beauty-product contexts.

Keywords: influencer endorsement; electronic word-of-mouth; online reviews; purchase decision; e-commerce

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technologies has transformed the way firms communicate with consumers and the way consumers obtain information before purchasing products. Social media, online marketplaces, short-video platforms, and review systems have reduced the information asymmetry traditionally experienced by consumers in physical markets. Rather than relying only on company-controlled advertising, consumers can now compare products, observe influencer demonstrations, read comments from other users, and evaluate large volumes of consumer-generated content before making a purchase. This development is particularly

important for products such as cosmetics and skincare, where consumers often face uncertainty about product quality, suitability, performance, and expected outcomes.

Within this environment, influencer marketing has become an important component of digital promotion. Influencers function as socially visible intermediaries who can communicate product information to followers and shape perceptions through expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, credibility, and relational connection. Freberg et al. (2011) showed that social media influencers are perceived through distinctive personality and credibility characteristics, while subsequent research has demonstrated that influencer characteristics and the quality of influencer-generated content can affect consumer attitudes and behavioural intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Vrontis et al., 2021). Thus, the persuasive effect of an influencer should not be reduced simply to the number of followers; the perceived quality and credibility of the source are also important.

At the same time, consumers increasingly depend on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and online reviews. eWOM represents consumer-to-consumer communication mediated by digital technologies, allowing opinions and experiences to reach audiences beyond traditional interpersonal networks (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Online reviews are a more specific form of consumer-generated information in which users evaluate products or services, often through ratings, written comments, photographs, or other forms of feedback. Such information can reduce uncertainty, increase perceived diagnosticity, and influence the consideration and evaluation of alternatives (Gupta & Harris, 2010; Filieri, 2016; Maslowska et al., 2017).

The beauty and cosmetics sector provides a particularly relevant setting for examining these mechanisms. Consumers may be unable to physically inspect or test a product before an online purchase and therefore depend heavily on social information. In Indonesia, the rapid development of e-commerce and social commerce has intensified competition among local and international beauty brands. The popularity of brands such as Skintific illustrates how influencer activity, social-media discussion, and customer reviews can become highly visible components of a digital marketing ecosystem. However, brand visibility itself should not be interpreted as proof that any single communication mechanism causes purchase behaviour.

Although previous studies have examined influencer endorsement, eWOM, and online reviews, the literature is fragmented across different theoretical perspectives, product categories, platforms, and consumer groups. Some studies emphasize source credibility and influencer characteristics, while others focus on information quality, review valence, review helpfulness, trust, or information adoption. Moreover, purchase intention is frequently examined instead of actual or stated purchase decisions, creating a conceptual distinction that should be maintained rather than treating the two constructs as identical.

Therefore, this article aims to synthesize the literature on influencer endorsement, eWOM, and online reviews and explain how each mechanism can contribute to consumer purchase decisions in digital e-commerce. The review also identifies theoretical linkages and research gaps that can guide future empirical research, particularly in the Indonesian beauty-product and emerging-market context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influencer Endorsement

Influencer endorsement refers to the use of individuals with an established social-media audience and perceived influence to communicate, recommend, demonstrate, or otherwise promote a product or brand. Unlike traditional celebrity endorsement, social-media influencer relationships often involve continuous interaction and perceived accessibility between the influencer and followers. This can create a sense of relational closeness that strengthens the persuasive potential of recommendations (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

The literature suggests that influencer effectiveness is multidimensional. Source credibility, including perceived expertise and trustworthiness, can increase the likelihood that followers accept product-related information. Attractiveness and similarity may facilitate identification, while authenticity can make sponsored content appear more congruent with the influencer's established identity. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that the

informative value of influencer content and source credibility are associated with consumer trust in branded content and purchase intentions. Vrontis et al. (2021), in their systematic review of influencer marketing, similarly emphasized the importance of influencer characteristics, content, audience relationships, and contextual factors.

Importantly, influencer endorsement should be distinguished from eWOM. An influencer may generate eWOM through product-related communication, but endorsement is fundamentally source-led and commercially structured, whereas eWOM broadly includes consumer-to-consumer communication that may be unsolicited and may originate independently of the firm. This distinction is important when explaining the mechanisms through which consumers respond to different forms of digital information.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

Electronic word-of-mouth refers to positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former consumers about products, brands, or organizations and made available to a multitude of people through the Internet. Compared with traditional word-of-mouth, eWOM has greater reach, persistence, accessibility, and traceability. Consumers can encounter opinions from individuals they do not personally know and can compare multiple opinions before making a decision.

From an information-processing perspective, eWOM can reduce search costs and uncertainty by supplying additional information beyond firm-generated promotional messages. Gupta and Harris (2010) demonstrated that eWOM recommendations can influence product consideration and choice, while Erkan and Evans (2016) showed that the quality, credibility, and usefulness of social-media information are important in explaining information adoption and purchase intention. Cheung and Lee (2012) further highlighted the role of social and psychological motivations in the generation and dissemination of online opinions.

The influence of eWOM is therefore not necessarily determined by volume alone. Consumers may evaluate who provides the information, whether the message appears credible, whether it is detailed and diagnostic, and whether different sources converge. Negative eWOM can also discourage purchase when it increases perceived risk or creates doubts about product quality. Consequently, future studies should examine both positive and negative eWOM and the conditions under which consumers accept or reject it.

Online Reviews

Online reviews are consumer-generated evaluations of products or services presented on digital platforms. Reviews may include star ratings, written comments, photographs, videos, and descriptions of actual usage experiences. They are particularly valuable in e-commerce because they can partially compensate for the absence of physical inspection before purchase.

Research on online reviews indicates that consumers pay attention to several attributes of review information, including valence, volume, quality, credibility, consistency, and helpfulness. Filieri (2016) argued that consumers use review information to assess product quality and reduce uncertainty, while Maslowska et al. (2017) demonstrated that review characteristics can affect consumers' probability of purchase. Macheka et al. (2023) further showed the relevance of online customer reviews in young female consumers' purchase intentions in the beauty-product context.

An important conceptual point is that online reviews overlap with eWOM but are not synonymous with it. Online reviews constitute a recognizable and structured form of eWOM, particularly on marketplace and review platforms. Treating them as separate variables requires researchers to define their boundaries clearly. In an integrated framework, eWOM may represent the broader electronic communication phenomenon, whereas online reviews represent a specific, structured information format that consumers use for product evaluation.

Consumer Purchase Decision

Consumer purchase decision refers to the consumer's decision process concerning whether, what, when, and from whom to purchase a product after evaluating available alternatives. Purchase intention is closely related

but conceptually distinct: intention reflects a predisposition or willingness to purchase, whereas purchase decision concerns the outcome or stage of the decision. Many digital-marketing studies measure purchase intention because actual transaction data are difficult to obtain; therefore, the distinction should be stated explicitly when synthesizing evidence.

In e-commerce, purchase decisions are influenced by perceived benefits, perceived risks, trust, information availability, social influence, and evaluations of product and seller credibility. Influencer content, eWOM, and online reviews can enter this process by supplying social and informational cues that shape beliefs about product quality and reduce uncertainty. Their effects should therefore be interpreted as information and persuasion mechanisms rather than as automatic determinants of purchase behaviour.

Theoretical Integration

The literature can be integrated through complementary theoretical perspectives. Source Credibility Theory helps explain why consumers may respond to influencer endorsement when the source is perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable. The Information Adoption Model explains how information quality, information credibility, and perceived usefulness can lead consumers to accept online information and use it in decision-making (Erkan & Evans, 2016). The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) perspective provides a broader structure in which digital marketing stimuli influence internal consumer states such as trust, perceived usefulness, or attitude, which subsequently contribute to behavioural responses. These perspectives are complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

Based on this synthesis, influencer endorsement primarily operates through source-related and relational cues; eWOM operates through socially distributed information and peer influence; and online reviews operate through structured, experience-based product information. Trust, perceived credibility, information usefulness, diagnosticity, and perceived risk can serve as mechanisms connecting these stimuli to purchase-related outcomes.

Synthesis of Prior Literature

Construct	Primary mechanism	Likely consumer response	Selected literature
Influencer endorsement	Source credibility, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, identification	Trust, attitude, purchase intention/decision	Freberg et al. (2011); Lou & Yuan (2019); Sokolova & Kefi (2020); Vrontis et al. (2021)
eWOM	Information credibility, social influence, information usefulness, uncertainty reduction	Information adoption, product evaluation, purchase intention/decision	Gupta & Harris (2010); Cheung & Lee (2012); Erkan & Evans (2016)
Online reviews	Review quality, valence, volume, helpfulness, diagnosticity	Perceived quality, risk reduction, product evaluation, purchase intention/decision	Filieri (2016); Maslowska et al. (2017); Macheka et al. (2023)

Research Gap

Three gaps emerge from the reviewed literature. First, influencer endorsement, eWOM, and online reviews are often investigated separately, although consumers may encounter all three forms of information during the same e-commerce journey. Second, the mechanisms linking digital information to purchase outcomes are not uniform: source credibility may be more important for influencer endorsement,

whereas information quality and diagnosticity may be more important for reviews and eWOM. Third, evidence from emerging-market beauty e-commerce remains comparatively fragmented, creating an opportunity to integrate these mechanisms in a context where consumers depend strongly on digital information before purchasing products that cannot be physically inspected.

Accordingly, this review proposes an integrated conceptual logic in which influencer endorsement, eWOM, and online reviews function as distinct digital information stimuli that may influence consumer trust, perceived usefulness, perceived risk, and product evaluation, which in turn contribute to purchase-related outcomes. This logic can be tested in future empirical studies rather than being treated as an established causal model by the present literature review.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a structured literature review approach. The original manuscript reported searches of Scopus, Emerald, and ScienceDirect using combinations of the terms influencer endorsement, eWOM, online reviews, and purchase decision, and reported 1,592 retrieved articles. In the present revision, that figure is treated as the initial retrieval pool rather than as the final analytical sample because the draft does not provide a documented screening flow, inclusion and exclusion criteria, duplicate removal procedure, or bibliometric outputs. This distinction is important for methodological transparency.

The literature was synthesized thematically around four dimensions: (1) characteristics and credibility of influencer endorsement; (2) characteristics and information-processing mechanisms of eWOM; (3) quality, valence, volume, and diagnosticity of online reviews; and (4) consumer purchase decision and related purchase-intention outcomes. Priority was given to peer-reviewed studies that directly addressed digital consumer behaviour, social-media influence, eWOM, online reviews, and e-commerce. The synthesis emphasizes conceptual relationships rather than calculating a pooled statistical effect size.

If the authors intend to retain the label “bibliometric analysis” in the final submission, a reproducible bibliometric procedure should be added, including the exact search strings, date of search, database-specific results, screening criteria, software used (e.g., VOSviewer or Bibliometrix), and outputs such as publication trends, citation analysis, and keyword co-occurrence. These elements should not be inferred from the reported retrieval count alone.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Influence of Influencer Endorsement

The reviewed literature indicates that influencer endorsement can affect consumer responses when the influencer is perceived as credible, knowledgeable, authentic, and relevant to the promoted product. Influencer content can make product information more accessible and can provide demonstrations or personal experiences that consumers perceive as more relatable than conventional advertising. Lou and Yuan (2019) linked the informative value of influencer content and influencer credibility with trust in branded content and purchase-related responses. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) further emphasized the role of parasocial interaction and credibility in shaping purchase intention.

However, endorsement does not guarantee persuasion. Consumers can recognize commercial motives, question authenticity, or perceive a poor fit between the influencer and the brand. The effectiveness of endorsement is therefore contingent on source characteristics, content quality, audience relationship, and product-influencer fit. This is particularly relevant for beauty products because followers may value demonstrations and personal experience but may also be sensitive to exaggerated claims.

Influence of eWOM

eWOM provides consumers with information that is often perceived as more independent than firm-controlled advertising. Positive eWOM can increase product consideration and reinforce favourable beliefs, whereas

negative eWOM can increase perceived risk and reduce purchase likelihood. The literature suggests that information credibility, quality, usefulness, and relevance are important determinants of whether consumers adopt eWOM (Gupta & Harris, 2010; Erkan & Evans, 2016).

The managerial implication is that firms should not attempt to manage eWOM solely by increasing message volume. Instead, they should support authentic customer experiences, respond constructively to complaints, and make reliable product information easily accessible. Attempts to artificially manufacture positive eWOM may undermine trust if consumers detect manipulation.

Influence of Online Reviews

Online reviews provide experience-based information that can be particularly useful when consumers cannot directly inspect a product. Review valence, detail, perceived credibility, and helpfulness can influence product evaluation and purchase probability. Maslowska et al. (2017) showed that review features can affect purchase probability, while Macheka et al. (2023) found that online customer reviews are relevant to young female consumers' purchase intentions in beauty products.

Nevertheless, consumers do not necessarily interpret all reviews equally. Very extreme ratings, repetitive comments, insufficient detail, suspiciously homogeneous language, or large inconsistencies between reviews may reduce perceived credibility. Therefore, review management should focus on facilitating authentic and useful customer feedback rather than simply maximizing the number of positive reviews.

Integrated Discussion

The three constructs should be understood as complementary components of the digital consumer-information environment. Influencer endorsement introduces a source-based persuasive cue; eWOM provides broader socially distributed opinions; and online reviews provide relatively structured evaluations of products based on user experience. Consumers may encounter these signals sequentially: an influencer can create awareness, eWOM can broaden social validation, and online reviews can provide detailed evidence during the final evaluation stage.

This sequence suggests that future empirical research should examine interaction and mediation mechanisms rather than assuming three independent direct effects. For example, influencer credibility may increase initial trust, while review diagnosticity may determine whether that trust survives closer product evaluation. Similarly, positive eWOM may attract attention, but detailed negative reviews may subsequently increase perceived risk. Such a process-oriented perspective is more consistent with the complexity of digital consumer decision-making than a simple assumption that more promotion always produces more purchases.

THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Theoretically, this review contributes by distinguishing three related but non-identical digital marketing mechanisms and integrating them through credibility, information-processing, and consumer-evaluation perspectives. The review also highlights the importance of distinguishing purchase intention from purchase decision. Future researchers can develop empirical models in which trust, perceived usefulness, information diagnosticity, perceived risk, or attitude mediate the relationship between digital stimuli and purchase outcomes.

Managerially, firms operating in beauty e-commerce should develop an integrated digital-information strategy. Influencers should be selected based on credibility, audience relevance, authenticity, and product fit rather than follower counts alone. eWOM should be supported through positive customer experiences and responsive engagement. Online review systems should encourage detailed, genuine, and balanced feedback. Firms should also monitor negative information as a source of product and service improvement rather than treating it only as a reputational threat.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This structured literature review indicates that influencer endorsement, eWOM, and online reviews can shape consumer purchase-related responses in digital e-commerce, but they do so through different mechanisms. Influencer endorsement relies strongly on source credibility, authenticity, expertise, and relational influence. eWOM contributes socially generated information that can reduce uncertainty and affect information adoption. Online reviews provide structured, experience-based information that can support product evaluation and risk reduction. Their effects should therefore be interpreted as complementary rather than interchangeable.

The principal limitation of the present review is methodological: the original draft reports a retrieval pool of 1,592 articles but does not provide a sufficiently documented screening protocol or actual bibliometric outputs. The conclusions should therefore be interpreted as a structured synthesis rather than as a statistical bibliometric result. Future research should use transparent systematic-review or bibliometric procedures and, where possible, combine survey data with behavioural or transaction-level data. Empirical studies in Indonesia and other emerging markets should also examine platform differences, product categories, influencer authenticity, review credibility, and the distinction between purchase intention and actual purchase decision.

For the beauty and cosmetics sector, future studies can test an integrated model in which influencer endorsement, eWOM, and online reviews influence trust, perceived usefulness, and perceived risk, which subsequently affect purchase intention and purchase decision. Such research would provide stronger evidence for how digital marketing mechanisms operate across the consumer journey.

Ethical Considerations and Data Availability

This article is a literature-based study and does not involve direct data collection from human participants or animals. Therefore, ethical approval was not required for the literature synthesis itself. The review is based on published literature and does not create a new human-subject dataset. The underlying literature-search records should be made available by the authors where permitted by database licensing and institutional access conditions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest related to this article.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledged the Sustainable Orange-Tech Life Value Excellence Research Group (SOLVE) research group of Center for Technopreneurship Development (C-TeD), Fakulti Pengurusan Teknologi dan Teknousahawanan, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka and The Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia. All errors and omissions are the responsibility of the authors.

REFERENCES

1. Cheung, C. M. K., & Lee, M. K. O. (2012). What drives consumers to spread electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms. Decision Support Systems, 53(1), 218–225.
2. Erkan, I., & Evans, C. (2016). The influence of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions: An extended approach to information adoption. Computers in Human Behavior, 61, 47–55.
3. Filieri, R. (2016). What makes an online consumer review trustworthy? Annals of Tourism Research, 58, 46–64.
4. Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. Public Relations Review, 37(1), 90–92.
5. Gupta, P., & Harris, J. (2010). How e-WOM recommendations influence product consideration and quality of choice: A motivation to process information perspective. Journal of Business Research, 63(9 10), 1049–1055.

6. Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19(1), 58–73.
7. Macheka, T., Quaye, E. S., & Ligaraba, N. (2023). The effect of online customer reviews and celebrity endorsement on young female consumers' purchase intentions. Journal of Contemporary Marketing Science.
8. Maslowska, E., Malthouse, E. C., & Bernritter, S. F. (2017). Too good to be true: The role of online reviews' features in probability to buy. International Journal of Advertising, 36(1), 142–165.
9. Osei-Frimpong, K., Donkor, G., & Owusu-Frimpong, N. (2019). The impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer purchase intention: An emerging market perspective. Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 27(1), 103–121.
10. Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 53, 101742.
11. Vrontis, D., Makrides, A., Christofi, M., & Thrassou, A. (2021). Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda. International Journal of Consumer Studies, 45(4), 617–644.